Chapter 2
SCHEDULING OF UTILITY PROJECTS

WHAT ARE UTILITY MILESTONES, WHAT DO THEY MEAN?
A milestone is a significant event. This chapter will discuss the various significant events that are involved in improvement project utility coordination. Each region may have different terminology, but in essence, the same project activities must take place for every project in every region. This guide will discuss the various significant events but will not attempt to discuss how each region labels the events. Generic "milestones" will be used. For this chapter, the milestones will be capitalized and bolded.

UTILITIES IDENTIFIED - This milestone is achieved when the Utility Unit (or designer) has reviewed the project, searched through the utility permits on file (along with other available records), identified all known utilities which may have facilities within the project limits, and provided a list of these utilities to the designer. See Chapter 3, "Utility Identification and Notification," for more information regarding utility identification.

UTILITIES NOTIFIED - This milestone is achieved when the utilities have been notified of the proposed improvement project. For Trans. 220 projects, this would include sending the "Proposed Highway Improvement Notice," Form DT1077, along with a cover letter.

The "Proposed Highway Improvement Notice" is a form that provides basic project information to the utility company. See Chapter 3, "Utility Identification and Notification," for more information on this form.

UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS - (Perhaps a better name would be "Plans Sent to Utilities.") This milestone is achieved when plans are sent to the utility companies. The plans must be complete enough to allow the utility to identify conflicts with their existing facilities and to design a utility relocation plan. For Trans. 220 projects, this would mean sending the "Project Plan Transmittal," Form DT1078, along with a cover letter and other appropriate documents. See Chapter 10, "Sending Plans to Utilities" for a more detailed discussion on this subject.

UTILITY RELOCATION PLANS APPROVED - This milestone is achieved when all utility coordination has been completed for your project. The utility conflicts have been identified and resolved in some manner. For Trans. 220 projects, this would mean that you have received and approved all of the utility work plans.

AWARD DATE MILESTONE - This milestone is achieved when the agreement for compensable utility work with a specific utility company has been fully executed, the project has been authorized for charging, AND the funds have been encumbered. More information on the **AWARD DATE MILESTONE** (aka Schedule Date) can be found in the

Program Management Manual, Document 05-05-15, Page 4, subheading "Schedule Date." It states, "...the schedule date reflects the anticipated date that the contract represented by the component will be awarded (moved to Life Cycle Stage 40) and the dollars encumbered."

There should be an **AWARD DATE MILESTONE** for each compensable utility parcel on your project. There may be times when the utility waives compensation, and there is no utility project ID needed for a particular utility. In that case, this milestone is met when the Utility Coordinator receives a letter from the utility company waiving compensation and the signed original release of rights document.

Another situation is when a utility company has land rights but there is no relocation required. When that occurs, there is no need for a utility project ID but there is a release of rights required. The **AWARD DATE**

MILESTONE would be met when the Region Utility Coordinator receives the signed release of rights document.

UTILITY STATUS REPORT - This milestone is achieved when all necessary utility relocation arrangements and agreements have been made, the Utility Unit has reviewed the final plan, **AND** the Utility Status Report has been signed.

SCHEDULING OF UTILITY MILESTONES

At the beginning of an improvement project, a timeline or schedule is established to assure that the various aspects of the project are completed at the appropriate times to keep the project progressing toward the proposed construction date. Suggested times for scheduling the utility--related milestones are given below. There may be reasons to alter these guidelines, but in general they should be adhered to.

The **UTILITIES IDENTIFIED** milestone should be scheduled one month before the **UTILITIES NOTIFIED** milestone. Utility Identification can be time consuming, so submit your utility identification request to the Utility Unit early enough to allow sufficient time for the Utility Unit to complete the work required prior to the milestone date. The time needed will vary from project to project, and is dependent on the size of project and type of work.

The **UTILITIES NOTIFIED** milestone should be scheduled two months before the Operational Planning Meeting (or other utility-related project meeting early in the design process). That way the Trans. 220 Proposed Highway Improvement Notice, Form DT1077, can be combined with the meeting invitation. This will reduce confusion and the amount of correspondence required.

The **UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS** milestone should be scheduled for a time when plans are available that are sufficiently complete to allow a utility to determine conflicts, and design a relocation plan. The right-of-way plat should be complete, all drainage (including storm sewer) should be complete, and the location of all structures including retaining walls should be shown. The location of fencing, beam guard, and detention basins also will impact utility facilities. A year prior to PS&E is a good guideline.

The **UTILITY RELOCATION PLANS APPROVED** milestone is tied to the **UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS** milestone. For Trans. 220 projects, when the Utility Unit contacts the utilities via the "Project Plan Transmittal" Form DT1078, they ask the utility company to return the utility relocation plan (or work plan) within the timeframe that is set by law. This timeframe varies between 90 days and 150 days, depending on the nature of the highway work, i.e. resurface, recondition or reconstruct. Also, the first submittal of the relocation plan may not be acceptable to the designer, and if a Trans. 220 work plan is rejected, the utility has 30 days to revise it and resubmit it. A good guideline would be to have the **UTILITY RELOCATION PLANS APPROVED** milestone 6 to 8 months after the **UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS** milestone.

The **AWARD DATE MILESTONE** should ideally be scheduled one year after the Relocation Order and one year prior to construction. (This assumes that the Relocation Order is approved two years prior to construction.) If there is a possibility that your project will be advanced, you may want to schedule it earlier. However, like the **UTILITY RELOCATION PLANS APPROVED** milestone, this milestone is also tied to the **UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS** milestone. On Trans. 220 projects, the timeframe for the submittal of relocation plans and associated documents is determined by the type of projects involved. This should be considered when establishing this milestone.

The **UTILITY STATUS REPORT** milestone should be scheduled the same month as the PS&E submittal date. The Utility Status Report should be submitted to the Utility Unit one month prior to the PS&E date.

See Figure 2-1 for more information on the time it takes to process a utility agreement. This information will help in setting the utility project milestones. The Region Utility Coordinator can assist the designer with establishing the utility milestones.

THE EFFECTS OF OTHER MILESTONES ON UTILITY MILESTONES

The **UTILITY NOTIFIED OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS**, **UTILITY RELOCATION PLANS APPROVED**, and **AWARD DATE MILESTONE** are all very dependent on the right-of-way plat and improvement plans being complete. The Utility Unit must send the Trans. 220 Form DT1078, "Project Plan Transmittal," prints of the right-of-way plat and a "complete plan" to the utilities so that they can determine the extent of their conflicts with the highway improvement project. For Trans. 220 purposes, a "complete plan" is defined as all the information a utility company needs to determine conflicts and to re-engineer their facilities. This would include storm sewer design, intersection details, and any other details that could affect the placement of their facilities.

The utility needs time to develop a relocation plan, determine cost estimates, and have the appropriate documents signed by individuals within their company. This whole process takes time, similar to the design process that we go through. A major relocation of the utility's facilities may even require approval by the Public Service Commission. The utilities prefer to be informed as soon as possible so that they have sufficient time to complete their work prior to construction. Therefore, when the Relocation Order or improvement plans are not done on schedule, it affects the time utilities have to do their work. Also, advancing projects may not be possible if a great deal of utility relocation is necessary and there isn't sufficient time to complete the work prior to the beginning of highway construction.

The **RIGHT-OF-WAY CLEAR** milestone also affects the utility companies. When the utility is relocating onto new right-of-way, they cannot begin their construction activities until the right-of-way has been acquired. A delay in the acquisition of all the parcels needed can delay the utility.

In the case where a utility decides to obtain private easements rather than occupy highway right-of-way, property owners may not negotiate with the utility until after they are done dealing with the DOT. This can also delay the utility. When the Designer is discussing right-of-way acquisition problems with the Real Estate Specialist, they should be aware of the potential problems with utilities completing their scheduled work on time. Also, changes to the right-of-way may affect utility relocation plans, and the utilities need to be informed of such changes as soon as possible. Consider this before altering the right-of-way to satisfy the concerns of a property owner. **The Utility Special Provisions may have to be changed when acquisition problems arise.**

UTILITY PARCEL NUMBERS

Each utility company that has a land interest in new right-of-way, either recorded or prescriptive, should have a parcel number assigned to it. It is often better to have separate parcel ID numbers for each division of a company. For example, you might want one parcel number for the gas operations and one parcel for the electric operations. This can simplify bookkeeping and billing for both the utility and for us. Also, some electric companies treat transmission and distribution as separate divisions. In that case, you may need one parcel for a large transmission line and one parcel for the rest of their electric distribution lines. In the City of Beloit, Alliant Energy Corporation (Wisconsin Power & Light) could have four parcel numbers, one for gas, one for electric, one for electric transmission, and one for water (they are the water utility in Beloit).

It is suggested that the utility parcel numbers be higher numbers than all real estate parcel numbers. For example, if there are 68 real estate parcels, start the utility parcel numbering at 80 or higher. Some people like to start with 100 for utility parcel numbers when there are less than 100 real estate parcels on a project. This makes the utility parcels easier to spot on a plat.

UTILITY PROJECT ID NUMBERS

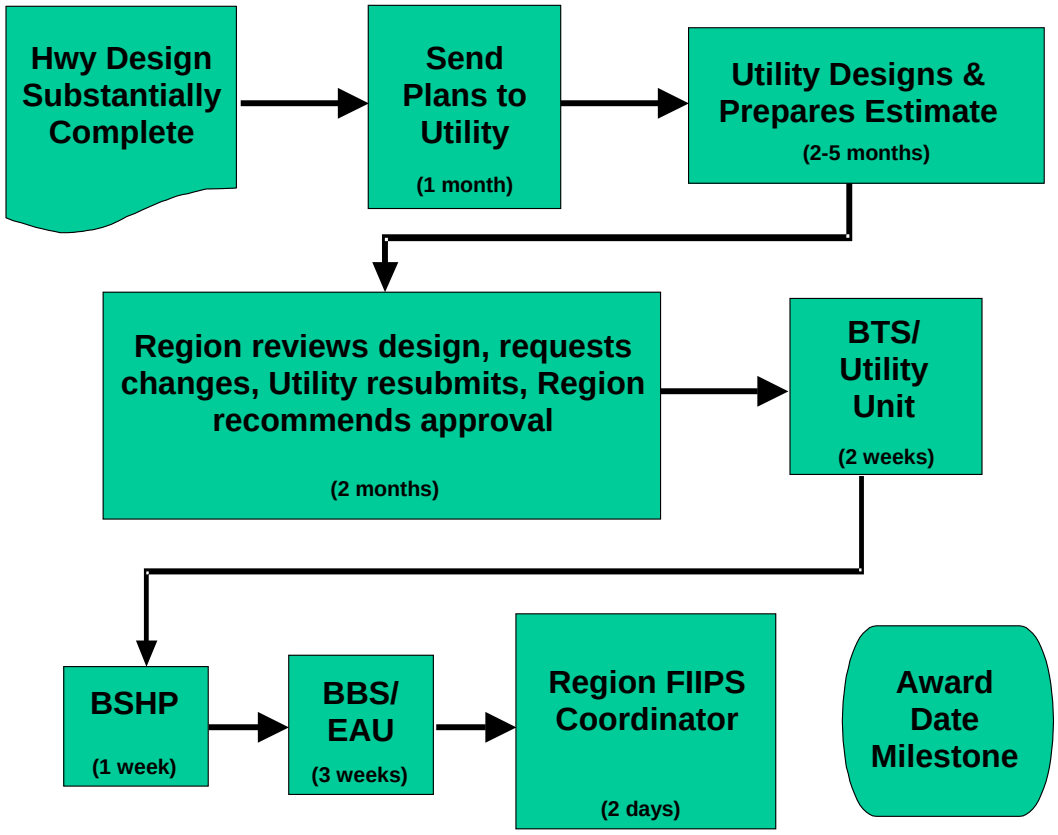
Utility Project ID's should be assigned when it is reasonable to expect that the utility will seek compensation for their relocation. As with parcels, you may want to assign different project IDs for each division of a company. In the past there have been times when a "final" bill was received for the electric work on a project. The project ID was then closed out. Later a bill was received for the gas work, which caused confusion and a lot of extra work to get the bill paid. Separate project ID numbers would have avoided the problem.

Not every parcel will have a project ID number. Some parcels will not require relocation, and some relocations will be so minor that it is not worth the effort to seek compensation.

Utility project IDs are usually in the 40-series, such as 5255-03-40. Some people like to have the last digit of the utility project ID match the last digit on the utility parcel. For example, utility parcel 102 would be project ID 5255-03-42. This works well in some situations but can be problematic when not all utility parcels have utility project IDs. This can lead to sequential numbers not being used when a companion utility parcel number does not seek compensation. When that happens, it becomes difficult to track which project numbers have been used and which numbers are still available.

Check with the Region FIIPS Coordinator for more information on how project ID numbers are created and what information you need to provide to them.

Utility Agreement Flow Chart



Allow 1 year from "Design Substantially Complete" to "Award"